

Testimony to the Environment Committee – March 17, 2014 Public Hearing

Senator Meyer, Representative Gentile and members of the Environment Committee, my name is Jane Brawerman and I am a resident of Middletown, CT. I am writing in support of SB 443, An Act Concerning Pesticides on School Grounds, Parks, Playgrounds, Athletic Fields and Municipal Greens, which I have both a professional interest in (as the Executive Director of a conservation organization) and personal interest in (as a parent). The bill would extend the ban on use of toxic lawn care pesticides, currently in place for K-8 schools, to high schools and other places where children and families play, including Connecticut parks, playgrounds and municipal fields. This is a critical step, necessary to protecting people, especially children, pets, our planet, and our food supply.

The widespread application of toxic lawn care chemicals, used essentially for aesthetic purposes, poses many serious and well-documented health and environmental risks. People (and pets) are exposed to these chemicals directly when sprayed on lawns and turf, and are also exposed when wells, aquifers and reservoirs become contaminated. Scientific studies have linked exposure to certain widely used lawn care chemicals with increased risk of asthma, childhood and adult cancers, birth defects, and reproductive problems, among others. Children, with their rapidly developing bodies, are especially susceptible. Our schools, parks and other places where children play are no place for toxic chemicals! Children are not only exposed directly when they play in areas treated with lawn care chemicals; they can also track them indoors, in their schools and homes, further exposing them, and exposing family members as well.

Lawn chemicals also make their way into the environment through rain runoff and drift, polluting rivers and streams, and are passed along through the food chain, contaminating fish and wildlife. These chemicals are a direct threat to bees and other pollinators, essential to food production and the health of our food economy, as well as the health and stability of our ecosystems. Ironically, lawn chemicals also kill the beneficial organisms in the soil that help plants grow.

With all of the credible evidence of risks associated with use of lawn care chemicals, should we really be taking a chance by using them so freely? Why would we even take these risks given that there are widely accepted, proven, viable, affordable and safe alternative lawn and turf care methods? There are many examples of beautiful turf maintained with safe, organic methods even here in CT, in Branford and Cheshire, for example. If you are not convinced that it's possible, I would urge you to see for yourself.

Your responsibility to protect environmental and public health from harm—harm that has been well-documented through scientific investigation—is of utmost importance. In this case the precautionary principle should clearly come into play as part of your deliberations.

I respectfully urge your support of this critical bill. Please protect our environment and our food supply, and prevent harmful exposure of children and their families by expanding the ban on use of toxic lawn care pesticides to all places where children play.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.